

Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, Issue #91, February 23, 2009.
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**TRADING IN EDUCATION:
THE AGREEMENT ON INTERNAL TRADE, LABOUR MOBILITY
AND TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN CANADA**

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Canada's provincial and territorial governments are committed to implement the Labour Mobility chapter of the *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)* in 2009. This article examines the implications of this agreement for teacher certification and teacher education programs. It argues that the full impact of AIT will not be immediately apparent, but over the long term the new circumstances have the potential to bring about profound changes to public education. This is a two-part paper: the first half examines the development of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* with reference to its labour mobility provisions. The second half lays out what we see as four troubling aspects of the Agreement.

Introduction

We believe a teacher is a teacher, a nurse is a nurse, and a welder is a welder. —Manitoba Premier Gary Doer, *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 18th, 2008.

The above statement by Manitoba Premier Doer was made following a meeting of the Council of the Federation, held in Quebec City in July 2008. At this meeting the premiers recommitted themselves to the *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)* originally signed by the provincial and territorial leaders and the Federal Government in 1994, and specifically to Chapter Seven of the Agreement related to labour mobility. In addition the Premiers confirmed

April 2009 as the deadline for provincial regulatory bodies to comply with the labour mobility provisions of the Agreement, with full inter-provincial mobility as the default position for any occupation that had not, by that date, negotiated specific provincial exemptions (Council of the Federation, 2008). The *Agreement on Internal Trade* is not an education policy *per se*, rather it is described by the Council as a “whole government initiative”. Nevertheless, it is an agreement that should raise concerns for teachers and those involved in initial teacher preparation for at least four reasons: (i) the requirement of a Pan-Canadian approach to professional certification represents a significant surrender of provincial jurisdiction in this central element of education policy; (ii) both the original Agreement and subsequent negotiations to implement labour mobility as fully as possible have taken place, until recently, with almost no input from educational organizations outside of provincial Ministries of Education and Colleges of Teachers and almost no public debate; (iii) much of the negotiations around implementation of the Agreement have seen pressures not simply to bring about enhanced teacher mobility across Canada – something that to a high degree already exists for graduates of Canadian teacher education programs and for which there is general support from all provincial Ministers of Education (Council of Ministers of Education, 1999) – but also the expectation by those driving the process that mobility (and any exceptions to full mobility) be based upon a model of explicit occupational standards and competencies that are grounded in a *training*, as opposed to an *education*, orientation to teacher preparation; and, (iv) further, by focusing on occupational standards and competencies but not the way in which those competencies are obtained, the Agreement opens up the possibility of alternative programs in initial teacher education located outside of the university with the potential to undermine the professional status that is currently afforded to teachers in Canada.

Drawing on extensive and varied university teaching, administration and research experiences in the province of Manitoba, the authors' purpose in this article is twofold.¹ The first purpose is to provide an introduction to the Labour Mobility chapter of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* and the ongoing negotiations aimed at bringing teacher certification into compliance with the Agreement. The second purpose is to elaborate on the four concerns identified above, and, using illustrations drawn primarily from the province of Manitoba, to highlight the challenges to both provincial autonomy and teacher professionalism contained in the notion that across Canada, "a teacher is a teacher".

The Agreement on Internal Trade – its content and implementation 1994-2009

How then does one view Canadian free-trade federalism as a new century emerges? One way is to have clearly in mind a picture of what the bedrock institutions of Canada's constitution and political system are currently. At its core, since 1982, are three familiar pillars: cabinet-parliamentary government; federalism, centred on a division of legislative powers but also on important fiscal principles; and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which defines both individual and group rights. But fourth and fifth pillars are also present now – namely, the quasi constitutional international trade deals and the [Agreement on Internal Trade] AIT. (Doern & MacDonald, 1999, pp. 151-2)

The *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT) was signed by the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories on July 18th, 1994 and came into effect on July 1st, 1995. Its primary purpose, as stated in its preamble, is to, "reduce and eliminate to the extent possible, barriers to the free movement of persons, goods, services and investments within Canada" in order to "promote an open, efficient and stable domestic market for long-term job creation, economic

¹ Both authors have written on contemporary Canadian Faculty of Education and University policy issues and governance matters (for example, Bruno-Jofre & Henley, 2002; Young, Hall & Clarke, 2007), and have extensively worked with the Faculty Associations and in university administration at their respective universities. In addition to the documentary sources cited at the end of the paper, data for this paper comes from a series of interviews and conversations with university colleagues and government officials across the country.

growth and stability” (Agreement on Internal Trade, 1994, p. 1). The multi-sector Agreement represents an extension of successive federal governments’ two-pronged desire: first, to fulfill their constitutional responsibility to establish Canada as an economic unity and, second, to extend their commitment to a neo-liberal, international free-trade agenda. Trebilcock and Behboodi (1995) trace the Agreement’s ancestry from the Macdonald Commission’s 1985 recommendation to establish freer internal trade and through the failed attempt to reach a constitutional settlement with the Charlottetown Accord in 1992. Determined to achieve some kind of result on the national unity front the Mulroney government’s Minister of International Trade, Michael Wilson, initiated talks with provincial ministers in 1993 designed to remove provincial trade barriers and suggested that they adopt the approach to this that had already proven successful in international trade negotiations. The Liberal Party took up the cause after it came to power in 1993 with John Manley, Minister of Industry, chairing the *Agreement on Internal Trade* into existence the following year (pp. 26-33).

Like the international trade agreements upon which it is modeled, AIT was negotiated behind closed doors and became a reality without public input or scrutiny. It functions not as law since it was not brought about through statute but rather as a political accord with a somewhat dubious legal standing (Swinton, 1995).

The focus of this article is Chapter 7 of the Agreement that deals with Labour Mobility. The purpose of this chapter, as described in Article 701 of the Agreement, is, “to enable any worker qualified for an occupation in the territory of a Party to be granted access to employment opportunities in that occupation in the territory of any other Party” (Agreement on Internal Trade, 1999, Article 701, p. 89). Applying to measures related to occupational standards, licensing, certification, registration and residency requirements of workers (Article 702), the

Chapter requires each province and territory to seek compliance with the Chapter by its municipal governments and its other governmental bodies and non-governmental bodies that exercise authority delegated by law (for example the British Columbia and Ontario Colleges of Teachers) and, where they are unable to secure voluntary compliance within a reasonable period of time to “adopt and maintain measures to ensure such compliance” (Article 703).

In documenting the playing out of these negotiations over Labour Mobility, Doern and MacDonald (1999, pp. 105-110) note that it was the federal government that was the main advocate for ensuring that the Chapter was as broad in scope as possible and would include the professions. The federal government’s initial position was that of promoting *harmonized, national standards based on objective competencies*. Many of the provinces, on the other hand, saw harmonization as too much of a federal intrusion into provincial matters and pushed instead for a strategy of working towards *mutual recognition of credentials* – what Doern and MacDonald refer to as “the driver’s license approach” whereby provinces simply accept and recognize the qualifications as certified by another province. Confronted by this provincial opposition the federal government modified its position and moved closer to the provincial position so that the agreed upon approach to the Chapter, in 1994, involved an extensive work program that would have each province and territory engaged in discussions with their various professions to establish practices that would enhance mobility. Despite the fact that there was some backing away from the requirements of national standards and “objective competencies” in the wording of the *Agreement on Internal Trade*, this orientation towards a competency-based approach to labour mobility remained a key part of much of the subsequent negotiations of a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* for teacher certification despite skepticism and resistance from provincial Ministers and Departments of Education. It has only been in the last year or so that the

Mutual Recognition Agreement approach, with negotiated exemptions and accommodation mechanisms, has been largely discarded in favour of increased pressure for full mobility.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of the Labour Mobility chapter of AIT resides with *The Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)*², which in turn created the *Labour Mobility Coordinating Group (LMCG)*, with representation from each of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, to support the implementation process. Each province then has a team of AIT officials/bureaucrats who provided local direction and liaison with the LMCG.³ The *Teacher Certification Registrars of Canada (TCRC)* made up of provincial and territorial certification officials was the body established by the provinces and territories to do the substantial groundwork necessary to develop a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* for the certification of teachers. As a critical early step in this process an *Agreement-in-Principle: Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade/Teaching Profession* was developed by the Registrars and endorsed by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) in September 1999 (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 1999). The *Agreement-in-Principle* was an interim measure that allowed teachers holding a teaching credential in one province or territory “to have access to teacher certification in any other province or territory in order to be eligible for employment opportunities in the teaching profession” (CMEC, 1999, p. 1). It stated that a teacher is entitled to receive a teaching credential from a receiving province or territory if the applicant: (i) holds a valid teaching credential from a Canadian province or

² The establishment of the *Forum of Labour Market Ministers* represents an important step in the AIT process and reflects its significance in the emerging dynamics of federal-provincial, and inter-provincial relationships, in the free trade era. The comprehensive nature of AIT creates for provinces a serious complication as almost every ministerial department becomes implicate in one way or another in the Agreement. The solution was to place responsibility for both coordinating a provincial trade position and representing provincial interests at the national forum with the Labour Ministers. When Labour Ministers are given authority to override other Cabinet colleagues this structure becomes highly problematic.

³ In Manitoba this group was originally located within the Department of Advanced Education and Training but was recently relocated to a newly created Department of Competition, Trade and Training.

territory; (ii) has successfully completed a professional teacher education program consisting of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours of coursework and practicum for teacher certification; (iii) provides all documentation required by the receiving province or territory; and (iv) satisfies any requirement of the receiving province or territory with respect to “fit and proper person”, currency of practice and language proficiency. Where applicants meet all of these provisions they will fall into one of three categories designated in the Agreement and be entitled either to full provincial teacher certification or to a temporary/bridging certificate valid for a specified period of time during which the applicant is required to complete successfully any outstanding academic or professional requirements of the receiving jurisdiction. The provisions of the *Agreement-in-Principle* were to stay in effect until a full assessment of commonalities and differences in certification requirements, as required by Annex 708 of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* was completed, leading to a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* and a July 2001 date was targeted for full implementation of the Labour Mobility provisions of AIT.

The July 2001 date proved to be unrealistic. For many people associated with teacher certification this *Agreement-in-Principle* largely resolved the issue of teacher mobility across Canada through the mechanism of provisional/interim certification. However, since the Agreement stopped short of full inter-provincial mobility for Canadian teachers, the expectation from AIT was that discussions would continue between provinces to further reconcile existing certification differences. These discussions moved fairly slowly until in 2005 the Registrars, in collaboration with CMEC, initiated an eight-month project designed to accelerate the move to a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* that would be in compliance with Article 708 of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* and the *Guidelines for Meeting the Obligations of the Labour Mobility Chapter* as revised by the Forum of Labour Market Ministers in 2003. According to these

guidelines the processes for the recognition of occupational standards and the reconciliation of occupational standards envisioned four main steps. These were: (i) an assessment of existing occupational standards for teacher certification in each province and territory in order to establish what commonalities existed across jurisdictions and whether the qualifications of teachers meeting the standards in one province could be recognized in others; (ii) immediate mutual recognition where there were high levels of commonality of occupational standards and certification requirements, and when this was not possible (iii) an occupational analysis to examine differences in occupational standards and certification requirements, to assess the significance of these differences and to reconcile differences to the degree possible (TCRC, 2006, p. 12); and, (iv) where differences could not be fully reconciled provinces and territories would be required to develop accommodation mechanisms that give appropriate recognition of the competencies of out-of-province applicants that would lead to full certification.

Based on a survey of all provinces and territories carried out in 2005, the Registrars concluded that there was a high degree of commonality (above 80%) of *generic occupational standards*⁴ for teachers across Canada although the specific knowledge and skills linked to each generic skill could vary across jurisdictions, and a high degree of commonality of teacher certification requirements. Differences between jurisdictions in certification requirements included requirements of evidence of language proficiency, currency of successful teaching experience, certification endorsements and/or restrictions (i.e. certification restricted to elementary or secondary education) and variations in the qualifications for a technical or vocational teacher. The Registrars' report concluded that the overall significance of the

⁴ Examples of generic occupational standards included on page 14 of the TCRC report include: the ability to; make reasoned decisions to act in the best interests of students; to understand the structure and expectations of the educational system and environment in which they teach; and, plan for effective instruction, assessment, evaluation and reporting.

differences in certification requirements *for teacher mobility* was, in their view, low - that since the 1999 CMEC *Agreement-in-Principle* jurisdictions had moved to facilitate inter-provincial mobility for teachers and the mechanism of provisional/interim certification had, with few exceptions, proven an effective bridging mechanism for applicants who did not fully meet the requirements of the receiving party. It was the Registrars' conclusion that a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* was achievable. However, recognizing in the fundamental political tensions involved in such a process they explicitly warned that:

The challenge will be to develop a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* that meets the expectations of labour mobility specified in Chapter 7 of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* while, at the same time, respecting that every province and territory currently has policies and practices in place that were developed in good faith, that reflect the history, politics and priorities of the jurisdiction and that – above all else – were implemented to ensure that teachers in their respective jurisdictions were certified and competent. (p. 37)

At the same time that the *Teacher Certification Registrars of Canada (TCRC)* were continuing to work towards an acceptable *Mutual Recognition Agreement*, the Alberta and British Columbia governments were negotiating a parallel bilateral *Trade, Investment and Mobility Agreement (TILMA)* that by the end of 2007 produced a *Memorandum of Agreement* signed by the governments of Alberta and British Columbia and by the British Columbia College of Teachers that served to reconcile standards for teachers in both provinces and the mutual recognition of each others certification requirements (British Columbia College of Teachers, 2008). While this Agreement has been controversial in some quarters (Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) British Columbia, 2008), for others it has provided a template for the ongoing AIT negotiations (Frampton, 2008).

By January 2008 the *Teacher Certification Registrars of Canada (TCRC)* had prepared a draft *Mutual Recognition Agreement* that was endorsed by provincial Ministers of Education at

the Council of Ministers of Education Canada in February 2008. Stopping well short of unconditional mobility the Agreement stated:

Currently in Canada, there is a range in the scope of teacher education programs, resulting from differences in occupational standards that are reflective of a generalist or specialist philosophy of teacher training and practice. The parties agree that a teacher education program consisting of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours including teacher preparation, pedagogy, the foundations of education, and a practicum will result in certification in all parties to this agreement, subject to the conditions in this agreement. However, at this time, differences in scope of practice may result in the granting of provisional/conditional certification with identified outstanding conditions. Specific jurisdictions may require individual applicants to complete additional courses and/or supervised teaching. These requirements constitute accommodation mechanisms for the purposes as defined in chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade. (Teacher Certification Registrars of Canada, 2008, p. 15)

Consistent with the CMEC *Agreement-in-Principle* (1999), this proposed *Mutual Recognition Agreement*, while moving towards increased reconciliation of teacher certification standards across the country, continued to assert the authority of individual provinces to have the final say in their certification requirements. The extent to which the pressures to ensure a more radical harmonizing of teacher certification are originating outside of Education/provincial Departments of Education (and appear to be dismissive of their efforts) was underlined in July 2008, when the Premiers directed Internal Trade Ministers to amend the *Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)* by January 1st, 2009 with the intent of achieving full/unconditional labour mobility by April 1, 2009. These amendments – which effectively disregarded the *Mutual Recognition Agreement* endorsed by the Ministers of Education - were to require that,

Any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one province or territory shall be recognized as qualified to practice that occupation by all other provinces and territories; and, such recognition shall be granted expeditiously without further material training, examinations or assessment requirements [and that] any exceptions to full labour mobility ... be clearly identified and justified as required to meet a legitimate objective such as the protection of health or public safety. (The Council of the Federation, 2008)

Since the language of “legitimate objective” in AIT has little or no application to teacher preparation, the imposition of full mobility with regard to teacher certification across Canada effective April, 2009 in the face of explicit opposition by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and large sectors of the educational establishment appears the most likely outcome.

Given the provisions of the 1999 *CMEC Agreement-in-Principle* and the steps that individual provinces have taken since then to reconcile some of their certification difference, the implementation of full labour mobility across Canada for all teachers certified in any province or territory would likely have little immediate impact. Nevertheless, far from being insignificant – a cleaning up of out-dated inefficiencies – the *Agreement on Internal Trade* does hold potentially very significant long-term implications for initial teacher preparation in Canada and, as a consequence, the long-term integrity of provincial public school systems. It is these issues that constitute the focus of the remainder of this paper.

Issue #1: The Surrender of Provincial Jurisdiction in Education

Nothing in this Agreement alters the legislative or other authority of Parliament or of the provincial legislatures or of the Government of Canada or of the provincial governments or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative or other authorities under the Constitution of Canada.
(Article 300 of the Agreement on Internal Trade, 1994)

The idea of federalism, as Stone (1988) observes, is a paradox that seeks to combine the autonomy of provinces and territories with the central authority of national institutions. This combination of contradictory principles, she notes “can be made to work easily enough in words ... but poetry does not resolve the tensions of concrete situations” (p. 301), where existing

arrangements come to be tested and, on occasion, changed.⁵ Despite the reassurances offered in Article 300 of AIT cited above, a compelling argument can be made that the implementation of AIT - in the interests of reaping (purported) efficiency gains in the Canadian internal market - is in fact substantially changing the powers of individual provincial institutions across a wide range of public service activities. As Doern and MacDonald (1999) document, “AIT negotiations saw an intense debate between both sovereignty and economic liberalism, with the latter in ascendancy and the former on the defensive or in the process of being significantly redefined” (p. 21).

The allocation of constitutional authority for education to the provinces in 1867 acknowledged and supported the reality that each jurisdiction had its own demographic, cultural and regional character that had informed, and would continue to inform, the purposes of public schooling within that jurisdiction and the expectations of the teachers through whom those purposes were to be pursued. As such, provincial teacher certification requirements are not simply an objective account of the technical competencies known to be associated with the occupation “teacher”⁶ but rather a moral and political expression of the aspirations of each province for the education of their children. The imposed implementation of a pan-Canadian *Mutual Recognition Agreement* on teacher certification effectively removes from Ministers of Education, Colleges of Teachers, and individual Provincial Governments authority over this central aspect of public education and puts such decisions beyond the reach of the provincial electorate.

⁵ The important question of shifting federal-provincial relationships in Canada over the last half century is beyond the scope of this article and the expertise of its authors. Richard Simeon’s (2006) book *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: The Making of Recent Policy in Canada*, particularly its postscript, provides one valuable entry point into this arena.

⁶ Even here, what is “known” is far from unproblematic, with for example one of the most noticeable differences between provincial requirements, length of program and length of practica/student teaching requirements, reflecting differences in the relative importance of pre-service education to teachers’ professional formation.

While *The Guidelines for Meeting the Obligations of the Labour Mobility Chapter* state that provinces are *not* required to “harmonize occupational standards” or “to develop a single national standard” the pressures to move in that direction in complying with the expectation of reconciliation of occupational standards has already been substantial. Furthermore, the current proposals to amend AIT so that individual provinces can seek to retain particular occupational requirements only where they can be clearly demonstrated to be in support of a “legitimate objective” of the province or territory greatly increases that pressure. The definition of a legitimate objective contained in the Agreement (Article 713) involving, “public security and safety; public order; protection of human, animal or plant life or health; protection of the environment; consumer protection; protection of the health, safety and well-being of workers; affirmative action programs for disadvantaged groups; provision of adequate social and health services to all its geographic regions; and labour market development” (pp. 95-6) has little resonance with the discourse of public education.⁷

The ongoing AIT/Labour Mobility negotiations provide numerous examples of the tensions between the expectations of maximized labour mobility, promoted by the *Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)* and the *Labour Mobility Coordinating Group (LMCG)*, and the assertion by provincial Ministers of Education of their jurisdictional autonomy in education – both individually and collectively through the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). Illustrative of this is the current situation in Manitoba. Here, at the same time that the Premier is stating “a teacher is a teacher” - implying that provincial differences in teacher certification requirements do not significantly effect the preparedness of a beginning teacher -

⁷ While at one level it can be argued that public education and the needs of a well educated local population speaks directly to such objectives as public security and safety, protection of the environment, or consumer protection, this is hardly the manner in which these notions are understood in this trade liberalization project.

Faculties of Education are adjusting their programs to comply with new provincial certification requirements that are being mandated the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Effective September 2008, in order to be certified, all new graduates from Manitoba Bachelor of Education programs will have to have included in their degree a minimum of three credit hours of government approved Aboriginal Education coursework and a minimum of six credit hours of approved Special Education/Diversity coursework.⁸ While it is possible to accommodate both of these contradictory perspectives on teacher preparation, in the province of Manitoba at least, there can be little doubt as to the outcome when there is disagreement between a Minister of Education and the Premier (Grace, 2005).

Issue #2: The absence of public debate

The complex eighteen chapter AIT is in many ways a significant agreement but it was achieved in a remarkably non-public way and with limited attention from Canadian voters. (Doern and MacDonald, 1999, p.4)

Given the importance of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* to federal-provincial and inter-provincial relations in general and specifically to provincial autonomy in teacher education/education, it is remarkable not only that the initial agreement was negotiated so much out of the public limelight but also that the subsequent fifteen years of negotiations to implement the ambitions of the agreement have, for the most part, also take place beneath the radar of public scrutiny, with little parliamentary debate or oversight (Simeon, 2006). Doern and MacDonald (1999) view the negotiations as an example of Canadian “executive federalism” – “an elaborate policy-making system characterized by secretive administrative, ministerial and

⁸ It is worth noting here that in these requirements the Department of Education has taken an active role in approving (and not approving) specific university courses - a level of government involvement in university programming that had not previously been seen in the past two decades.

first-minister meetings, and bargains in those areas that have cross-jurisdictional impact” (pp. 26-7).

As noted earlier, it has been the Teacher Certification Registrars for each province and territory, meeting as a group and working on behalf of their respective Ministries of Education, who have been the lead officials working on a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* on teacher certification and communicating with the *Labour Mobility Coordinating Group (LMCG)* and the *Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)*. The work of TCRC has fluctuated in intensity over the years as the issue of teacher certification and a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* has risen and fallen as an AIT priority, but since 2005 and particularly with the confirmation of August 2009 as the implementation date⁹, their work has once again become urgent.

While teacher certification remains the responsibility of provincial Ministers/ Departments of Education, and Colleges of Teachers in Ontario and British Columbia, certification is tightly connected to both initial teacher education and to teacher hiring. Given this interconnectedness, what is striking is how little consultation has taken place on this matter with any other educational partner, and how little awareness many of those partners still have of the AIT negotiations and their impact on teacher certification. Manitoba mirrors, in this regard, what we believe to be the situation in most other provinces. Here, no formal consultations have taken place with the Faculties of Education that deliver the Bachelor of Education programs that currently lead to certification, nor with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees whose members hire and employ the products of the certification process, nor with the Manitoba Teachers Society, and only recently has this issue found its way onto the agenda of the Teacher Education and Certification Committee (TECC), the formal advisory committee to the Minister

⁹ In the documentation of the 2009 deadline dates April is cited as the date by which mobility agreements have to be signed off and August the date by which the agreements are operational – although there appears some ambiguity in the use of these separate deadlines.

of Education, Citizenship and Youth. Since a central dimension of public education is that of active public participation in educational decision-making, the fact that this process – with its potential for redefining teacher preparation and certification in Canada – has occurred, essentially *in camera* without either professional or public input or support represents a shift away from a traditionally consultative approach to educational policy making in Manitoba (Henley & Young, 2001) and has to be a reason for serious concern.

**Issue #3: The discourse of “occupational standards and competencies”
in teacher certification**

Technical rationality in education ... creates the impression of disinterest and objectivity. It implies that there is a common framework for people, with fixed goals. In the words of Popkewitz (1987) it “flattens reality and obscures the struggles which fashion and shape our world” (p. 12). One of the things that has been ‘flattened’ is the complexity involved in professional education. (Furlong, 2005, pp. 127-8)

The concept of a profession is a contested and dynamic one (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Beck, 2008), and one that Hoyle and John (1995) observe, is “more readily instanced than defined” (p. 1). Nevertheless, central to public school teaching’s current status as a professional activity is the recognition that teachers possess a unique body of specialized knowledge acquired through prolonged post-secondary education and applied intelligently in practice, and that a provincially directed certification process protects the public interest by ensuring that all teachers possess and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions appropriate to this responsibility (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007).

Currently the process of establishing what constitutes the appropriate and necessary knowledge base of the profession is a collaborative, provincial activity involving (i) individual

universities – that define the content of their Bachelor of Education degrees and whose research is central to the construction of that knowledge base; (ii) the profession – directly in British Columbia and Ontario through the Standards of Practice established by their respective College of Teachers and through their involvement in the accreditation of initial teacher education programs, and less directly in other provinces through advisory committees such as Manitoba’s TECC and through cooperating teachers’ participation in the mentoring and assessment of teacher candidates’ in-school practica – and, (iii) the government – that may mandate a series of requirements, either to be embedded within the Bachelor of Education degree or met outside of it.

Broadly defined these requirements, embedded in an overall commitment to the well-being and learning of students and to ongoing professional development, have generally consisted of three main areas: (i) *professional knowledge and understanding* (i.e. understanding of the curriculum, learning theories, provincial education policies etc); (ii) *professional values and commitments* (i.e. commitment to social justice, equity, integrity etc.); and, (iii) *professional skills and attributes* (i.e. skills in pedagogy, classroom management, assessment, etc.). (See for example, Ontario College of Teachers, 2008.)

While the Teacher Certification Registrars Canada (2006) report a high level of inter-provincial consistency in these general occupational requirements, they are expectations that are, necessarily, broadly framed in ways that recognize both the “complexity and contestability of professional knowledge” (Furlong, Campbell, Howson, Lewis, & McNamara, 2006, p. 41) and allow for multiple forms of assessment from the university and the profession leading to professional certification. Commenting on this orientation towards teachers’ professional

knowledge with specific reference to Scotland,¹⁰ Munn (2008) juxtaposes this approach with the “technical-rationalist” notions of professional knowledge that under-pin the application of the language of “occupational competencies” to teaching, and states:

The Scottish emphasis on the holistic nature of judgments about beginning teachers’ competence, so that knowledge, skills and professional values are assessed through action in the classroom and through the quality of reflection on that action resists a conceptualization of teaching as a number of discrete competencies. A key feature of the quality of reflection is a critical awareness of different kinds of knowledge revealed in students’ writing in their personal development portfolios and in formal assignments. While specific competencies can be the focus of formative assessments in the early stages of initial teacher education, meeting the standard [for certification] is clearly not simply a matter of adding up performance on discrete competencies. (p. 69)

John Beck (2008) is similarly critical of a competency model of professional knowledge that seeks to ‘operationalize’ teaching as, “a series of discrete, trainable and measurable performances” (p. 18). Beck’s fundamental critique is that the deep structure of this orientation is what Bernstein (2000, p. 59) calls “*trainability*”. It is, he argues, an approach that systematically seeks to exclude beginning teachers from access to the elaborated forms of academic study that would equip them to become *intellectually independent* and *critically reflexive* about their practice and to engage with substantial questions concerning the aims and values of education/public schooling and its relationship to society.

At this time it appears that the use of occupational analyses based on discrete occupational competencies as the basis for a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* has been set aside by the premiers, but the discourse of occupational competencies remains a central underlying orientation of AIT. Our concern is that such an approach – which may be quite unproblematic in many other occupations – would constitute a serious and unwelcomed challenge both to the

¹⁰ Scotland has had along standing impact on provincial education policies and specifically some significant connections to the development of teacher education policy as it was the Scottish General Teachers Council that provided much of the direction for the establishment of British Columbia and Ontario’s Colleges of Teachers.

construction of beginning teachers' professional knowledge base, as well as the process by which meeting these standards of the profession is adjudicated.

Issue #4: The issue of “service providers” and teacher preparation

It is understood that the occupational analysis will examine, among other areas: the scope of practice, generic skills, specific skills, licensing, certification or registration requirements and other entry requirements and qualifications pertaining to the occupation. The occupational analysis will not consider differences in training methods since it is recognized that competencies and abilities can be acquired through different combinations of training and experience. (The Agreement on Internal Trade, Annex 708)

Since the movement of pre-service teacher education programs into the university in the third quarter of the twentieth century (Gregor, 1993; Sheehan & Wilson, 1994), a Bachelor of Education degree has become the normal entry requirement to the profession and all Canadian initial teacher education programs have been delivered by higher education institutions with the support of local schools and the teaching profession.

A justification for this location and jurisdiction lies in a particular notion of professional practice as intellectually independent and critically reflexive, and on Faculties of Education serving three essential university functions: (i) that they are centres of expertise, or relevant knowledge, underpinned by a theoretical perspective; (ii) they are centres of research and scholarship where systematic enquiry provides the basis for improved professional practice; and, (iii) they are centres for the maintenance of a critical tradition (Bridges, 1996, p. 51).

From this perspective the difference between “teacher education” and “teacher training” is stark, and the language of the *Agreement on Internal Trade* with its orientation towards a model and discourse of occupational competencies coupled with the guidelines contained in the quotation from Annex 708 at the start of this section, calls into question the university location of

initial teacher education for at least two reasons. First, as already noted, a competency-based approach that focuses on training rather than education undermines the legitimacy of teacher education as an intellectual endeavour, and second, if what is deemed of importance is only the demonstration of “competencies/competence” and not the process by which that competence is arrived at, there is little grounds for not recognizing any number of other “service providers” or “alternative routes” into teaching.

This is the “deregulation” path that has been actively promoted in many states within the USA (Hess, Rotherham, & Walsh, 2004), and in a slightly different manner in England (Sorensen, Mandzuk, & Young, 2007). Consistent with a ‘market democracy’ approach to education, this would be an approach, we argue, that would constitute a serious threat to the intellectual development of teachers, the quality of public education in Canada, and to the valuing of education as a “public good”.

While collaboration between universities and the profession have not been without their difficulties, this delivery model, and the processes of quality assurance associated with it, has effectively met the staffing needs of the public school system and contributed to a system that was recently assessed by the Conference Board of Canada as second only to Finland in its quality (Conference Board of Canada, 2008).

Conclusion

Education is purposive as well as functional: its aim is to contribute to culture understood in its anthropological, artistic, and individual senses. In education a person responds to questions, pursues interests, and acts upon curiosity in ways that are always unscripted rather than predestined or preordained. Education constitutes an unsettling and unrehearsed adventure. (Hansen, 2008)

The *Agreement on Internal Trade* is an omnibus, multi-lateral, agreement that represents the application of international free trade thinking and language to the Canadian domestic economy. By viewing everything included in the Agreement as a trade issue, teacher certification, and by association public education becomes commodified – “traded in” -first and foremost a matter of economic policy before it is a matter of social policy concerned with the well-being of individuals and the well-being of society.

The ability of teachers to move and work across Canada with relative ease and without unjustifiable barrier to certification is clearly important,¹¹ not only for individual teachers but equally for school boards and provincial governments, and for the enrichment of students’ education (Hansen, 2008). What is argued in the article is that this mobility already exists, particularly since the 1999 Council of Ministers of Education’s *Agreement-in-Principle* (CMEC, 1999). Given this existing mobility, it is likely that the pending deadline for a *Mutual Recognition Agreement* set for August 2009 will pass without any immediate or dramatic changes to the teaching profession and public education in Canada. Indeed it is possible to argue that this is why, for so long, this issue has attracted so little attention or concern from educational organizations (the other argument, made earlier in this paper, being that AIT negotiations have largely taken place in private without public consultation). However, what is argued in the article is that, far from being insignificant, the Agreement has the potential for having a major, negative impact both on teacher certification and on public education in Canada.

Initial teacher education programs, teacher certification, and teacher recruitment are closely connected to one another. As illustrated quite clearly in British Columbia in recent years

¹¹ Equally important, and as yet not well developed, is the importance of the removal of inappropriate barriers to internationally prepared teachers receiving certification and working in Canada (see Schmidt, in press). While this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, it is one that nonetheless will be significantly impacted by a labour mobility agreement.

(Grimmett, 2008; Young, Hall, & Clarke, 2007) universities are unlikely to want to offer Bachelor of Education programs that do not lead to certification, and conversely, certifying bodies, especially provincial governments, need to develop certification requirements that will allow for an adequate supply of well qualified teachers to support their school systems. While it is school boards and local jurisdictions that actually make teacher hiring choices, certification defines the pool from which school boards may seek to do this hiring. The mutual recognition of provincial teaching certificates does not *require* the harmonization of certification standards across the country, nor does it *require* that any harmonization process be a process of lowering standards or “a race to the bottom” (CUPE-BC, 2008) to the lowest set of expectations currently in place. It does, however, we suggest, create a strong pressure for that to happen, and this pressure is increased when an imposed deadline cuts off discussions designed to reconcile existing differences.

The case of Manitoba again offers an interesting illustration, and cause for concern. Manitoba certification currently requires for Manitoba graduates, among other things, completion of a two year Bachelor of Education degree that contains a minimum of 24 weeks of supervised in school “student teaching” and a minimum of three credit hours of approved coursework in Aboriginal Education. The certification requirements of its eastern neighbour, Ontario, are a one-year Bachelor of Education degree with a minimum of eight weeks of student teaching. Coursework in Aboriginal Education is not required.¹² Those provisions could remain unaltered by AIT: Manitoba could retain its existing requirements arguing that these are important provincial priorities that it promotes through its own in-province university programs

¹² The argument here is *not* that Manitoba’s ‘two year program’ is automatically better than Ontario’s ‘one year’ program. Ontario has its own unique and well-developed system of Advanced Qualifications that supports career-long professional learning beyond initial certification. The point here is that full portability of initial certification intentionally ignores such provincial differences.

and still waive those requirements for out-of-province teachers. School boards could decide that applicants with the longer pre-service preparation are likely stronger candidates and reflect this in their hiring practices and salary schedules. But, conversely, students could start to choose their Faculty of Education based on the length of program and significant numbers of them could look to take their initial teacher training/education out-of-province and this, or continued pressure of limited resources, could easily lead to the shortening of Manitoba Bachelor of Education programs. The shorter the length of required initial teacher education the more open teaching is to the undermining of its professional status and the image of the teacher as a public intellectual as opposed to a skilled technician and a ‘servant of the state’. Elsewhere that erosion has seen the expansion of generally short, non-university-based teacher training programs that, we believe, if copied in Canada would be disastrous for the quality of our teachers and our schools.

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